

EXPLORING JAPANESE POLITENESS STRATEGIES IN *MORIARTY THE PATRIOT*: A PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF WILLIAM JAMES MORIARTY'S UTTERANCES

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Abstract

This study investigates the politeness strategies employed by William James Moriarty in the anime *Moriarty the Patriot* from a pragmatic perspective to identify the types of politeness strategies used by the character and examine their communicative functions within social interactions. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, the data were collected from episodes 1–11 through observation, listening, and transcription techniques. The data were then analyzed using Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, which classifies politeness strategies into bald on-record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record strategies. The findings reveal that all four strategies appear in William's utterances, with negative politeness and positive politeness occurring most frequently. These strategies are used not only to maintain social harmony and demonstrate respect, but also to construct authority, manipulate psychological responses, and control communication in various situations. Furthermore, the study shows that Japanese politeness is highly contextual and closely connected to indirectness, social hierarchy, interpersonal relationships, and communicative intentions. This research contributes to pragmatic studies on Japanese politeness in anime, particularly within the crime-thriller genre, by highlighting the dynamic relationship between politeness, power, and psychological communication in fictional discourse.

Keywords: *Anime; Brown and Levinson; Japanese pragmatics; Moriarty the Patriot; politeness strategies; William James Moriarty.*

1. Introduction

Language conveys meaning while reflecting social and cultural values. In anthropological linguistics, language is regarded as a social practice that reflects norms, ways of thinking, and patterns of human interaction Veronika (2025). This is evidently clear in Japanese society, where language is closely intertwined with cultural values such as social hierarchy, harmony, and respect. Consequently, the choice of linguistic forms in Japanese cannot be separated from the situational context and the social relationship between the speaker and the addressee. Ignatieva & Trazanova (2022) argue that words carry moral and symbolic weight that shapes social relationships. The choice of linguistic forms in Japanese is closely related to situational context and the social relationship between speaker and addressee. Thus, Japanese language use is not merely structural but also deeply connected

to cultural values. One clear example is linguistic politeness. Li & Gao (2025), state politeness in Japanese is expressed through *keigo*, considerate expressions, and pragmatic strategies aimed at maintaining harmony. In practice, politeness functions not only as a norm of etiquette but also as a social strategy for negotiating power, social distance, and communicative goals.

As media evolves, Japanese language use can be observed not only in real-life interactions but also in popular media such as anime. Anime therefore provides a valuable source for examining how politeness strategies are represented in fictional discourse. Nesa & Rahayu (2024) state that anime symbolically reflects Japanese linguistic and cultural practices through characters, dialogue, and plotlines. It is also widely used as a resource for learning Japanese language and culture because it presents diverse contextual and communicative language styles. Consequently, anime offers relevant linguistic data for the qualitative analysis of politeness phenomena.

The anime *Moriarty the Patriot* presents a distinctive linguistic context by adapting a British social setting into Japanese through specific linguistic strategies. William James Moriarty is portrayed as an aristocratic intellectual whose rhetorical skills reflect strategic language use. In this context, linguistic choices function not only as communication tools but also as instruments for constructing intellectual authority, symbolic dominance, and psychological influence. This demonstrates that linguistic politeness in anime is not always associated with normative compliance, but can also operate as a complex pragmatic strategy.

Despite growing research on language use in anime, studies on linguistic politeness in criminal-intellectual contexts remain limited. Previous research has mainly examined honorific language in family or comedy anime, language stereotypes in comedy genres, and the educational role of anime in general such as research by Aibonotika, A., et al. (2025), language stereotypes in the comedy genre by Toşu, I (2025), or the educational role of anime in general by Nesa & Rahayu (2024). Little attention has been given to how politeness strategies are used by morally ambiguous characters who display intellectual and social superiority. This gap highlights the limited discussion of the meanings and functions of linguistic politeness in complex anime characters. Therefore, this study explores politeness strategies in a criminal-intellectual anime context and contributes to pragmatic analysis in media linguistics.

Based on the discussion above, this study examines Japanese politeness strategies in the utterances of William James Moriarty in *Moriarty the Patriot* from a pragmatic perspective. The study aims to identify the types of politeness strategies used, analyze their realization in different social contexts and relationships, and examine their communicative functions. Using a qualitative pragmatic approach, the analysis considers situational context, social relationships, and communicative intentions reflected in the character's utterances. Theoretically, this study contributes to research on Japanese politeness in anime and the pragmatic role of language in character construction. Practically, it may serve as a reference for Japanese language learning, especially in understanding the contextual use of politeness in fictional discourse.

2. Literature Review

Japanese politeness is situated within pragmatics, which examines language as a socially contextualized act. Within this framework, politeness is understood not merely as a normative expression of etiquette but also as a linguistic strategy for managing social relationships, maintaining interactional harmony, and protecting the self-image of both

speakers and addressees. Politeness in Japanese reflects general principles of courtesy and the Japanese linguistic system, including the use of keigo and indirect expressions, as well as strategies for obscuring meaning (*aimai hyougen*). Previous studies have demonstrated how these linguistic forms operate pragmatically in communication. Auliya et al. (2025) found the expression “*chotto*” in the anime “*Hyouka*” functions as a negative politeness strategy aimed at minimizing potential threats to the interlocutor. Auliya et al found result aligning with Pramita et al, (2023), who show that politeness in anime is conveyed through word choice, intonation, and implicature. Taken together, these studies suggest that Japanese politeness should be understood as a dynamic communicative practice shaped by communicative intentions and social relationships rather than as a fixed set of linguistic norms.

The representation of language in anime further demonstrates that popular media functions not only as a medium of communication but also as a site for constructing character identities and reflecting broader social values. Aibonotika, A., et al. (2025) study found that the honorific language used in the anime “*Kumichou Musume to Sewagakari*” reflects the social roles and hierarchical relationships among the characters. Meanwhile, study by Salsabilla, D., et al. (2025) examined violations of the principle of politeness in *tsundere* characters and found that breaches of politeness are actually used to portray a character. Aibonotika, A., et al. (2025). Another study with the title “Forms of Social Interaction in Yuuki Yaku’s Anime “*Jaku Chara Tomozaki-Kun*” Putri and Haryanti (2024), demonstrated that characters’ psychological backgrounds and social status significantly influence patterns of social interaction. Collectively, these studies highlight how anime reflects social roles, stereotypes, and psychological backgrounds, though most focus on comedy or youth genres rather than crime-thriller context. Few studies examine politeness strategies in morally complex characters such as William, making this study a novel contribution to pragmatic analysis in anime. This gap highlights the need for a more comprehensive pragmatic analysis of how politeness strategies function not only to maintain social harmony but also to construct intellectual authority, symbolic power, and communicative intentions. Accordingly, this study views politeness as a strategic and context-dependent pragmatic phenomenon. This perspective is further supported by Hakimi (2024), who emphasized that politeness plays a crucial role in communication, particularly through the contextual use of *kotowaza* within speech practices.

2.1 Pragmatics

Pragmatics studies meaning based on context, including the relationship between speaker, addressee, and communicative purpose. In Japanese language studies, pragmatics is widely used to analyze politeness, indirectness, and implied meanings, as Japanese communication is strongly influenced by social hierarchy and interpersonal relationships. Li & Gao (2025), argued that dialogues in anime should not be understood merely as fictional linguistic expressions, but also as representations of social practices, cultural ideologies, and interactional norms that provide valuable pragmatic data because they reflect how characters negotiate identity, authority, and social relationships through language. Pragmatics serves as the primary foundation for analyzing linguistic politeness as a contextual phenomenon that cannot be understood in isolation from social situations and relationships. Similarly, Rahmawati et al. (2023) demonstrated that pragmatic strategies shape communicative roles and interactional purposes in both face-to-face and online communication. Research by Mahmudi et al. (2021) and Prasetya et al. (2022) further showed that language use varies according to social roles and hierarchical relationships, such

as those between teachers and students. Other languages also employs similar techniques, such as Wiranty and Ramaniyar (2023)'s study on the Malay language in Pontianak. Collectively, these studies indicate that pragmatics provides an important theoretical framework for understanding linguistic politeness as a contextual and socially constructed phenomenon.

2.2 Brown and Levinson's Theory

Brown & Levinson (1987) classified politeness strategies as mechanisms used to minimize threats to an interlocutor's face, commonly referred to as Face Threatening Acts (FTA). The classification of these politeness strategies is as follows: (1) bald on-record, which conveys meaning directly; (2) positive politeness, which emphasizes closeness and solidarity; (3) negative politeness, which respects the interlocutor's freedom; and (4) off-record, which conveys meaning indirectly and allows multiple interpretations.

Despite being widely applied in pragmatic studies, Brown & Levinson's (1987) theory has also received considerable criticism, particularly in relation to non-Western cultural contexts. Several scholars argue that Brown and Levinson's framework reflects a Western bias because it is based on individualistic concepts of face and autonomy. In Japanese and other East Asian cultures, politeness is more closely related to social harmony, group relationships, and contextual sensitivity. As a result, some researchers question the theory's ability to fully explain the indirectness, ambiguity, and hierarchical relations common in East Asian communication. Nevertheless, recent studies by Li & Gao (2025) and Maruki (2022) suggest that Brown and Levinson's framework remains relevant for analyzing Japanese linguistic politeness when adapted to local cultural norms and interactional contexts.

2.3 The Concept of Politeness in the Japanese Language

According to Ide (1989) and Nakane (1970), the concept of politeness in Japanese is rooted in cultural principles such as social hierarchy, harmony (*wa*), and an awareness of one's own position (*uchi-soto*). Although these studies remain foundational in understanding Japanese social interaction, recent research has emphasized that Japanese politeness is also closely related to intercultural communication and contextual interpretation. McConachy (2019) argues that pragmatic awareness is strongly connected to intercultural understanding, while Idemaru, K., et al., (2019) demonstrate that Japanese politeness is frequently conveyed implicitly through multimodal and phonetic features. Furthermore, Oatey & Wang (2019) highlight the importance of maintaining face, harmony, and contextual sensitivity in communication. Maruki (2022) also highlights that Japanese communication places a high value on social harmony, so adapting to the context of a situation is far more important than simply stating one's intentions or personal desires bluntly. In Japanese social interaction, overly direct speech—such as refusing, criticizing, or giving orders may be considered impolite because it can threaten the interlocutor's comfort and social harmony. The development on politeness in Japanese language also come in the form of code-mixing as evident in the study done by Pramesti & Hermawan (2024) that found Indonesian students combine Indonesian and Japanese to create communication that feels both polite and formal.

2.4 Keigo (*Sonkeigo*, *Kenjougo*, *Teineigo*)

As part of the Japanese politeness system, *keigo* is generally classified into three main categories: *sonkeigo* (honorific language), *kenjougo* (humble language), and *teineigo*

(polite language). These linguistic forms reflect the speaker's attitude, social status, and relational position toward the interlocutor. In Japanese communication, the use of *keigo* functions not only as a marker of politeness but also as a means of maintaining social harmony and expressing sensitivity to hierarchical relationships. Recent studies have further demonstrated that the use of *keigo* extends beyond everyday communication into popular media such as anime. The study by Maruki (2022) shows that *keigo* in popular media such as anime is often used strategically to build the image of a character and certain communication purposes, even if it is not always normative. This perspective reinforces the view that Japanese linguistic politeness operates as a context-dependent pragmatic strategy closely associated with characterization, social power, and interpersonal dynamics.

3. Research Method

3.1 Research Design

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach grounded in pragmatics. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study aims to understand linguistic phenomena contextually through the interpretation of speech meaning within a social context, rather than through numerical measurement. Meanwhile, the pragmatic approach was chosen because the study focuses on language use within the context of communicative situations. Pragmatics explores the relationship between linguistic form, meaning, and the underlying social context.

3.2 Data Source

The data source for this study consists of the utterances produced by William James Moriarty in the anime *Moriarty the Patriot*. The study analyzed only episodes 1–11 of the first season. These episodes were selected purposively because they contain the initial development of William James Moriarty's character, including various formal and informal interactions that prominently demonstrate the use of linguistic politeness strategies within different social and communicative contexts. In addition, these episodes provide diverse interactional settings involving hierarchical relationships which are relevant to the objectives of this study.

Example of data:

「アーグルトン伯爵、はじめてお目にかかります。William James Moriarty と申します。」 - William

[*Argleton hakushaku, hajimete omenikakarimasu. William James Moriarty tomoushimasu*] - William

"Earl Argleton. Pleasure to meet you. My name is William James Moriarty." - William

「私に何か用かな」 - Earl

[*Watashi ni nanika yoo ka na*] – Earl

"Do you have any business with me?" – Earl

Data 1 (Episode 1, 14:33)

3.3 Data Collection

The data were collected through observation, listening, and transcription techniques. The researcher repeatedly watched episodes 1–11 of *Moriarty the Patriot* to identify William

James Moriarty's utterances containing politeness strategies. During observation, attention was given to situational context, including character relationships, social hierarchy, communicative intentions, and emotional setting. Relevant utterances were then manually transcribed and organized into data sheets. The transcription focused on utterances that met three criteria: (1) containing politeness strategies, (2) having clear interactional context, and (3) being relevant to pragmatic analysis. After transcription, the utterances were classified according to the politeness strategy categories proposed by Brown & Levinson's (1987) theory. To maintain data accuracy, the researcher rechecked the dialogue context and compared the transcription with available subtitles and audio pronunciation.

3.4 Data Analysis

The data in this study were analyzed using the interactive qualitative analysis model proposed by Miles B. et al. (2014). This analytical model views qualitative data analysis as a continuous process conducted alongside data collection. The analysis consisted of three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. In the data reduction stage, the researcher selected and categorized William James Moriarty's utterances containing politeness strategies through non-participant observation and transcription. The utterances were then classified based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness framework: bald on-record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record. In the data display stage, the utterances were organized into analytical tables according to politeness type, conversational context, social relationships, and pragmatic function. This process helped identify recurring linguistic patterns and contextual tendencies throughout the narrative. The final stage involved drawing and verifying conclusions by interpreting the communicative functions and pragmatic meanings of each strategy in relation to character construction, social hierarchy, and communicative intentions. To ensure analytical rigor, interpretations were supported by contextual dialogue evidence and relevant theories of pragmatics and Japanese politeness. Verification was conducted through repeated examination of transcripts, subtitles, dialogue context, and audio pronunciation. In addition, intercoder reliability was applied by comparing coding results with categorizations from previous politeness studies to reduce subjective bias and strengthen analytical consistency.

3.5 Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of the data was ensured through credibility and analytical consistency procedures. To maintain credibility, the researcher repeatedly rewatched selected episodes of *Moriarty the Patriot* to verify utterances, conversational context, speaker intentions, and character relationships. Transcriptions were also checked against the audio, subtitles, and scene context to minimize interpretive errors. To enhance analytical rigor, the researcher applied consistent coding procedures throughout the analysis process by classifying utterances according to the politeness strategy framework proposed by Brown and Levinson's (1987). Interpretations were based on contextual evidence, including situational background, social hierarchy, communicative purpose, and character relationships. Since this study used publicly available anime data, no privacy issues were involved. However, linguistic and cultural interpretations were conducted carefully to avoid cultural misrepresentation or overgeneralization of Japanese communication practices.

4. Results and Discussion

Based on data collected from dialogue excerpts featuring William James Moriarty in the anime “Moriarty the Patriot”, the following elements of Japanese linguistic politeness are as listed:

Episodes	Politeness Strategies			
	Bald on Record	Positive Politeness	Negative Politeness	Off Record Strategy
Episode 1	2	1	2	1
Episode 2	4	2	-	4
Episode 3	8	2	2	-
Episode 4	6	7	3	1
Episode 5	4	1	4	1
Episode 6	3	2	4	1
Episode 7	-	4	7	1
Episode 8	1	-	-	-
Episode 9	-	-	-	-
Episode 10	-	3	1	1
Episode 11	2	4	5	1

Based on the findings, all four politeness strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson’s (1987) were identified in the utterances of William James Moriarty throughout episodes 1–11 of Moriarty the Patriot. The distribution of these strategies varies across episodes depending on the conversational context, social relationships, and communicative purposes of the character. Among the identified strategies, negative politeness appears relatively dominant in several episodes, particularly episodes 5, 6, 7, and 11. This suggests that William frequently employs indirectness, mitigation, and respectful expressions to maintain social distance and avoid imposing directly on others. Positive politeness is also frequently observed, especially in episodes 4, 7, and 11. This strategy is to create psychological closeness and gain the trust of his interlocutors. In contrast, bald on-record strategies are predominantly found in episodes 2, 3, and 4, while off-record strategies appear less frequently but remain significant because they reflect ambiguity and implied meaning, both of which are characteristic features of Japanese communication. These findings suggest that linguistic politeness in the anime functions not only as a form of social etiquette but also as a pragmatic strategy for constructing William’s intellectual image, symbolic authority, and communicative influence. However, in episode 8, only one data point is cited for the bald on record strategy classification. This is because William’s utterance does not comply with the criteria for politeness strategies based on Brown & Levinson’s (1987) theory, and is therefore marked with the symbol “-“. However, in episode 9, no data was found because there is no dialogue from William in this episode.

4.1 Bald On-Record

「アーグルトン伯爵、はじめてお目にかかります。William James Moriarty と申します。」
- William

[*Argleton hakushaku, hajimete omenikakarimasu. William James Moriarty tomoushimasu*] - William

“Earl Argleton. Pleasure to meet you. My name is William James Moriarty.” - William

「私に何か用かな」 - Earl

[*Watashi ni nanika yoo ka na*] – Earl

“Do you have any business with me?” – Earl

Data 1 (Episode 1, 14:33)

In data 1, William James Moriarty employs a bald on-record strategy through a direct self-introduction to the Earl without preliminary small talk or indirect opening expressions. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), bald on-record strategies are characterized by directness and clarity in conveying communicative intentions. William immediately states his purpose of introducing himself, which demonstrates efficiency and confidence in interaction. Pragmatically, this utterance may potentially threaten the Earl's negative face because William interrupts the Earl's personal space and ongoing activity without prior invitation. However, the utterance simultaneously reflects Japanese linguistic politeness through the use of *kenjougo* (humble language), particularly in the expressions 「お目にかかります」 (*ome ni kakarimasu*) and 「申します」 (*moushimasu*). These forms position William in a socially lower and respectful stance toward the Earl, who occupies a higher aristocratic status. The use of humble expressions softens the directness of the bald on-record strategy and reduces potential Face Threatening Acts (FTA). This shows that Japanese politeness strategies are often hybrid and context-dependent, combining direct communication with linguistic forms that maintain social harmony and hierarchy. The interaction also reflects William's pragmatic competence and strategic self-presentation. Although he speaks directly, his use of honorific language helps maintain an image of refinement, intelligence, and aristocratic etiquette. Therefore, the utterance functions not only as self-introduction but also as a strategy for constructing authority and gaining social legitimacy.

4.2 Negative Politeness

「選曲様のレストラン付近にまで下民がいるということが船内特にでも言いずりまわっているということか」 - Blitz

[*Senkyoku yo no resutoran fukin ni made gemin ga iru to iu koto ga sen'nai toku ni demo haizuri mawatte iru to iu koto ka*] - Blitz

“If people from the lower classes are near the first-class dining room, that means they're all over the ship, right?” – Blitz

「災難でしたね。よろしかったらこれで」 - William

[*Sainandeshita ne. Yoroshikattara kore de*] - William

“A shame isn't it? If you don't mind, use this.” – William

「ああすまんだ」 - Blitz

[*Aa, sumanda*] - Blitz

“Ah, my thanks.” – Blitz

Data 2 (Episode 6, 10:02)

In data 2, William James Moriarty employs a negative politeness strategy through the expression 「よろしかったら」 (*yoroshikattara*), meaning “if you do not mind” or “if you would like.” According to Brown and Levinson (1987), negative politeness functions to minimize imposition and respect the interlocutor's autonomy or negative face. Rather than directly instructing Blitz to use the offered item, William frames his utterance as an optional

suggestion, thereby reducing pressure on the interlocutor and maintaining interpersonal distance. The pragmatic context of the interaction further strengthens the use of this strategy. Blitz is emotionally agitated after his pants become wet and expresses hostility toward lower-class passengers through discriminatory language such as 「下民」 (*gemin*), meaning “commoners” or “lower-class people.” In this tense atmosphere, William’s response is notably calm, restrained, and considerate. Instead of confronting Blitz’s anger directly, William strategically employs polite and indirect language to de-escalate the situation. The phrase 「災難でしたね」 (*sainan deshita ne*), meaning “That was unfortunate,” also functions as an expression of empathy, allowing William to acknowledge Blitz’s discomfort before offering assistance. From a pragmatic perspective, William’s utterance shows how negative politeness functions as a form of social control and emotional management. Through indirect and considerate language, he maintains the interlocutor’s dignity while guiding the interaction toward a calmer and more cooperative atmosphere. Although the utterance appears polite, it also reflects William’s strategic communicative competence and psychological awareness. The interaction further reflects Japanese communication culture, particularly the preference for indirectness and conflict avoidance. William’s linguistic choices demonstrate sensitivity to social harmony and interpersonal balance, showing that Japanese politeness strategies are shaped not only by formal rules but also by pragmatic intentions and situational context.

4.3 Positive Politeness

船中で上映された症について話せる相手が欲しくて」 - 男

[*Fune naka de jouei sa reta-shou ni tsuite hanaseru aite ga hoshikute*] – Otoko

“I’d like to talk to someone about the show being performed on the ship.” – Lelaki

「これは見ものでしたね。しかし僕はそれほどバレエに精通して」 - William

[*Kore wa mi mono deshitané. Shikashi boku wa sore hodo bare-ni seitshuu shite*] – William

“It’s really an interesting watch, isn’t it? It is a shame I don’t have any knowledge about ballet.” – William

Data 3 (Episode 7, 18:16)

In data 3, William James Moriarty employs a positive politeness strategy through the expression 「これは見ものでしたね」 (*Kore wa mimono deshita ne*), meaning “It was truly an impressive performance, wasn’t it?” According to Brown and Levinson (1987), positive politeness strategies function to create solidarity, reduce social distance, and strengthen interpersonal relationships between speaker and interlocutor. The use of the sentence-final particle 「ね」 (*ne*) is pragmatically significant because it invites agreement and shared emotional alignment from the interlocutor. Rather than presenting his opinion as entirely individual, William frames the statement as a mutually recognizable evaluation, thereby fostering interactional closeness. This linguistic choice reflects a communicative strategy aimed at building rapport and maintaining smooth social interaction. William further strengthens this positive politeness strategy through the following statement, 「しかし僕はそれほどバレエに精通して」 (*However, I am not particularly knowledgeable about ballet*). Pragmatically, this expression reflects modesty and self-lowering behavior, preventing William from appearing intellectually dominant despite his sophisticated demeanor. By admitting limited expertise, he reduces social distance and creates a more

balanced interaction. More broadly, the dialogue shows that positive politeness in Japanese communication functions not only as friendliness but also as a strategy for interpersonal negotiation. William's utterances demonstrate his ability to manage social interaction through empathy, shared evaluation, and modest self-presentation.

4.4 Off Record Strategy

「それだけじゃない、他にもありますよ。一つ一つ教えて差し上げましょうか」 – William

[*Sore dake janai, hoka ni mo arimasu yo. Hitotsu hitotsu oshiete sashiagemashou ka*] - William

"It's not just that—there are other places too. Must I really have to tell you about each one?" – William

「乗客名簿に 宝石店ショート乗っていて。殺すつもりはなかった」 – Eddie

[*Joukyaku meibo ni houseki ten shooto notte ite. Korosu tsumori wa nakatta*] - Eddie

"The passenger list states that he is the owner of a jewelry store. I had no intention of killing him." – Eddie

Data 4 (Episode 11, 17:32)

In data 4, William James Moriarty employs an off-record politeness strategy through the utterance 「一つ一つ教えて差し上げましょうか」 (*Hitotsu hitotsu oshiete sashiagemashou ka*), meaning "Shall I explain each one to you individually?" According to Brown & Levinson (1987) off-record strategies function by conveying meaning indirectly, allowing the speaker to imply intentions without stating them explicitly. In this interaction, William does not directly accuse Eddie of murder but gradually guides the conversation toward an implicit conclusion that pressures Eddie psychologically to admit his involvement. Pragmatically, the utterance carries a strong implicature despite its polite structure. This indirectness minimizes open confrontation while increasing psychological pressure. As a result, Eddie responds defensively by claiming he "had no intention of killing him," indicating that William's indirect utterance successfully prompted a self-defensive confession without explicit coercion. The use of the expression 「差し上げましょうか」 (*sashiagemashou ka*), a polite and humble form meaning "shall I offer/explain," further strengthens the complexity of the interaction. Linguistically, the expression appears courteous and cooperative. However, pragmatically, the utterance functions as a rhetorical mechanism of dominance. William maintains an elegant and composed manner while subtly cornering the interlocutor, showing that politeness serves not only to preserve harmony but also as a manipulative strategy to control conversation and assert intellectual superiority. This interaction reflects the hybrid nature of Japanese politeness, where indirectness and ambiguity maintain social decorum while concealing persuasive intent. In the anime, these communication patterns are transformed into psychological tools for interrogation and manipulation.

Overall, William's politeness strategies shift between direct and mitigated speech. Bald on-record strategies are used in situations requiring firmness and control, while positive and negative politeness help maintain social relationships and subtly influence interlocutors. Off-record strategies reflect indirect communication rich in implicature, allowing William to convey hidden meanings without explicit statements. The use of these strategies highlights William's dual role as both a charismatic intellectual and a strategic manipulator. The findings contribute to pragmatic studies of Japanese politeness in popular media,

particularly within the crime-thriller anime genre. Unlike previous studies that focused on comedy or slice-of-life anime, this research shows that politeness strategies can function beyond normative etiquette as mechanisms of manipulation, ideological control, and strategic negotiation. Thus, the study expands Japanese pragmatic research by emphasizing the relationship between politeness, power, and psychological communication in fictional discourse.

5. Conclusion

The analysis of William James Moriarty's utterances shows that Japanese politeness functions not only as a social norm but also as a pragmatic strategy. All four politeness strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987)—bald on-record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record—were identified in *Moriarty the Patriot*, with negative and positive politeness appearing most frequently. These strategies are used according to communicative context, social relationships, and conversational goals. The findings reveal that politeness in the anime functions beyond conventional etiquette, serving as a tool for constructing authority, influencing interlocutors, and maintaining psychological control. The study also demonstrates that Japanese politeness is highly contextual and closely related to indirectness, social harmony, and communicative intentions. Overall, this study contributes to pragmatic research on Japanese politeness in anime, particularly within the crime-thriller genre, by showing how politeness strategies can function as mechanisms of manipulation, symbolic power, and intellectual dominance. However, since this study focuses only on William James Moriarty in *Moriarty the Patriot*, future research is encouraged to examine broader anime genres, character types, and cross-cultural politeness strategies.

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